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Boston Young Mens Christian Union

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THE TEMPERANCE PURITAN.*

BY EDWARD EVERETT HALE.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, Anniversary Week, or, as we older people call it, "Election Week," would not be rightly closed without this meeting. It is the direct result of the work of the Puritan fathers of New England, as the Unitarian Church itself is the child of the Puritan Church, and thus has the right to summon you that it may consult with you in regard to the cause of temperance and purity. I do not like to have any misunderstanding as to the true meaning of that great word which built this country, and on which our institutions are founded,—the word "Puritan." The word "Puritan" means a man who can keep his body pure, a man who knows that the pure in heart see God, a man who knows that wisdom from above is first pure. And, from the Pope of Rome on the one hand down to the hardest radical on the other, the man who knows how to keep his body under, to keep it in subjection, is, and always has been, a Puritan. Those worthy

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men from whom Cromwell organized his Ironsides, when they met in battle the gay courtiers under Prince Rupert, rode them down and rode over them, because they knew how to keep their bodies under, how to keep them in subjection. The same thing is true in the history of this country. What is it that made a few white men stronger than those wild troops of savages around them? What is it but that they knew how to keep their bodies pure? Miles Standish and the rest of them were more than a match for these savages; but I fear that it might be said that the white man's whiskey has gone farther than his powder did among this host which he was to subdue.

From the moment of the first court which was held in Charlestown in the cabin of the "Arbella" down to this moment, the legislation of Massachusetts has been based on the central principle that the State has a right to say that the sons and daughters of the State, that the little children born into its arms, shall be pure. And, if anybody asks whether the Puritan spirit is dying out, I should like to put him into the place where I was twenty-four hours ago, and to have heard him hear the appeal which a Puritan of honorable family, a descendant of a Puritan, the great-great-grandson of a Puritan president of a Puritan college, made, and to have heard the enthusiasm with which that appeal was received, when

he spoke with burning words of contempt of any political party that should try to lift to the highest seat in the government a man whose personal habits were not pure. Then and there we knew that the Puritanism of New England is not dead to-day.

But, if anybody asks us if in the history of the world that old lesson is repeating itself, he has only to take the history of the last war between Germany and France. How is it that, with all the ability of the French people, with all the keenness and *finesse* of the military authorities, France gave way before the Teutonic legions, before the Germans, as they came in? What did that mean? It meant that the Frenchman cannot keep his body down as the German can. That is, the average Frenchman gives way before the average German. I think that the history of this last war shows that France was crushed by brandy and absinthe, by drunkenness and adultery, and not by the march of the German forces. That is the lesson which history is teaching, and it is the lesson which every practical man will repeat to you to-day. I see young men before me who are destined to great success in the fields of literature and of science, if they keep their bodies pure. I shall not have many occasions to appear before such an audience as this; but, if this were the last word that I were ever to speak to any audience, I should like to say that, after a long life, in which I have been acquainted

with many men of science, many men of letters, many men whose business it was to work their brains, and to work them hard, even harshly, I can testify to you, as they would testify to you, that, if the brain is to do its work, if it is to be *kept* at work, if it is to produce the marvels of literature, the spirit and body must be kept pure, kept under subjection. You know how many instances there have been where the noblest promise has been flung away because the purity of life was not there. There was not that personal purity by which alone one sees the love of God. Especially is it the business of a body like this to build up the cause of personal purity, the cause of temperance. By whatever method you use, you should teach boys and girls, young men and women, how they are to keep their bodies pure, to make them living temples of the living God. Certainly, we have a great deal to encourage us in the steady drift and movement of society. We have some discouragements. It is a pendulum swinging backwards and forwards, of course. Such is the law of all progress, and no person of sense would ask that the nineteenth century should be reserved or set aside from the action of that law. It is a great deal to have gained what we have gained, and that every century is standing on higher ground and is able to look on a broader prospect. It is conceded so far as this: it is understood that no woman must ever be tempted

to drunkenness. It would be easy, I think, to get a license law passed by the sixteen directors of Boston,—the sixteen men who manage Boston in the interests of liquor,—to pass a law that no woman should ever be permitted to drink intoxicating liquor. It is still farther settled that on the days of election, when the right use of men's brains is necessary for the welfare of the community, no man shall drink intoxicating liquor. It is also settled that no boy and no girl, no person under the age of twenty-one, may ever buy at any hour of the day or night a drop of intoxicating liquor. That much is gained. I may say, last, though not least, that it is settled that no clergyman may ever drink liquor. I think we have advanced a good deal when we have come so far. I am glad to be one of those who are permitted to speak on a public occasion like this, in hopes of bringing up the rest of the community to the standard to which these favored classes have been brought.

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